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AUTHOR DeKay, Sam
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ABSTRACT

Pointing out that influential movements in psychology, reading instruction, and curriculum development have greatly altered the terrain formerly occupied by the "teaching of literature," this literature review outlines the different ways education researchers have examined the following questions about literature instruction: (1) What are the desired goals or outcomes of litrature instruction? (2) How does the teaching of literature influence learning, and how can it be employed in content areas like social studies and science? (3) What are the roles of literature texts in language education, and how do literary genres and textual formats impede (or facilitate) learning? (4) What is "good literature?" and (5) How should literature be presented in the classroom, and what instructional strategies are especially effective in the teaching of literature? The review argues that Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) distinction between aesthetic and efferent reading is one that is relevant to most of these questions--according to Rosenblatt, "efferent" reading occurs when "the reader responds to the printed words or symbols...toward concepts to be retained, ideas to be tested, actions to be performed after reading." The review sees aesthetic reading, by contrast, as involving a more emotionally engaged relationship to the text. The review finds that current research offers a potpourri of theories, objectives, and strategies which frequently present contradictions and paradoxes--especially as regards different orders of learning outcomes and the role of the teacher of literature in the classroom. (Contains 57 references.) (TB)

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CLASSROOM RESEARCH INTO THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE

Sam DeKay
Fordham University

Until the early 1980s, the "teaching of literature" represented a practice confined primarily to high school and college-level English classrooms. In the United States, "literature" generally consisted of an identifiable corpus of works authored primarily by European and American writers. Exposure to this literature, it was thought, would familiarize students with the great works of a cultural tradition. In addition, study of these works was considered an appropriate means to practice and refine the skills of literary analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.

This portrait of past practice is yet a reality in many classrooms today. However, influential movements in psychology, reading instruction, and curriculum development have greatly altered the terrain formerly occupied by the "teaching of literature." Cognitive psychologists, for example, have provided cogent and persuasive arguments that readers do not merely extract meaning from texts; rather, readers create meanings for themselves by applying their own prior knowledge and experience to the words supplied by authors' texts. The whole language movement has also affected the teaching of literature. By emphasizing the role of "print-rich environments" and the value of whole, meaningful texts (as opposed to the artificially constructed texts typical of many basal readers in the past), advocates of whole language instruction have invited literature into all grade levels, especially in elementary schools. Finally, the "literacy across the curriculum" movement has convinced numerous educators that reading and writing instruction is too critical to remain within the boundaries of traditional language arts classes. Rather, the practice of literacy must extend to other disciplines, including the physical

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and social sciences and mathematics. The teaching of literature has, therefore, become a legitimate endeavor in history, biology, and algebra classrooms.

As the scope of literature instruction has expanded, educational researchers have attempted to clarify and answer several vexing questions:

1. How is literature manifested in the classroom? That is, what are the desired goals, or outcomes, of literature instruction?

2. How does the teaching of literature influence learning? Or, how can literature be most beneficially employed in such content areas as social studies and science?

3. What are the roles of literature texts in language education? How do literary genres and textual formats impede (and facilitate) learning?

4. What is "good literature"?

5. How should literature be presented in the classroom? What instructional strategies are especially effective in the teaching of literature?

The purpose of this paper is to examine the manner in which current researchers have responded to these issues.

The Definition of "Literature"

Despite the increased scholarly attention provided to literature as a crucial element of elementary and secondary school curricula, researchers have attained no consensus concerning the definition of "literature." Rosenblatt's (1978) succinct observation is still valid today: "The English term 'literature' is notoriously fluid" (pp. 22-23). However, most researchers concur that literary works are identifiable because of genre (the function or format of text), of linguistic factors, or of the nature of the transaction between reader and text. Some researchers focus upon several of these elements.

Wepner & Feeley (1993), for instance, assert that literature is a clearly recognizable genre: "trade books, as opposed to basal readers or textbooks" (p. 26). Lazar (1993) also offers a genre-based definition, but admits that language is also a significant ingredient: "[Literature means] those novels, short stories, plays and poems which are fictional and convey their message by paying considerable attention to language which is rich and multi-layered" (p. 5). By contrast, Rosenblatt (1983) maintains that literature involves genre and a unique, qualitative relationship between reader and text:

> Whatever the form -- poem, novel, drama, biography, essay -- literature makes comprehensible the myriad ways in which human beings meet the infinite possibilities that life offers. And always we seek some close contact with a mind uttering its sense of life. (p. 6)

Purves (1991) focuses upon the linguistic and experiential dimensions of literature: "Literature is a complex and artistic use of words that stimulates readers' imaginations. Reading and studying literature should make readers aware of the beauty and power of the language" (p. 20). Moss (1990), however, offers a definition that encompasses genre, language, and experience: "[Literature] is the world of books, a rich world of language, ideas, and human experience in the form of poetry, fable, myth, legend, folktale, fairytale, adventure, contemporary and historical realism, fantasy, mystery, biography, and so on" (p. 21).

How is Literature Manifested in the Classroom?

As discussed previously, the influence of cognitive psychology, the whole language movement, and the "literature across the curriculum" initiatives have enabled school administrators, instructors, and educational researchers to articulate new purposes for literature

instruction. In general, researchers have proposed 11 major objectives, or outcomes, for the teaching of literature (Langer, 1994; Probst, 1991; Purves, 1991).

Comprehension

Generally, educators employ the term "comprehension" to designate the task of ascertaining, or understanding, the meaning of a message (Cassidy, 1984; Kapel, 1991). Cognitive psychologists, while concurring with this concept, tend to focus upon comprehension as a mental effort, as "...an active and goal-oriented construction of coherent mental representation based on newly acquired information and prior knowledge" (Schnotz & Ballstaedt, 1994, p. 964).

Durkin (1979) maintained that, despite the acknowledged significance of comprehension instruction in the curriculum, most American classrooms offer no, or little, instruction concerning the meaning-making processes of student readers. Rather, Durkin observed, instructors focus upon assessing the results of comprehension; students, however, remain adrift concerning the precise strategies needed to become competent meaning-makers.

As a result of Durkin's admonitions, and in concert with the burgeoning whole language movement, literature instruction has become a major focus of many schools' attempts to emphasize skills which facilitate the making of meaning. Researchers have, for instance, been concerned to determine if students attain improved comprehension with literature-based instruction, by comparison to basal readers. Morrow (1992), for example, has demonstrated that second-grade minority children have significantly improved reading comprehension when provided a literature-based program than similar children offered basal-only instruction. (In this context, "comprehension" is measured by means of scores attained on written and oral story recalls and a "cued" recall probing for story details.) Morrow indicated, however, that both the

experimental (literature-based) and control (basal-only) groups performed at equal levels on the California Test of Basic Skills, administered following the course of instruction.

In a review of then-extant research, Purves (1989) compared the reading comprehension skills of students who are taught from a reader-response perspective (that is, with emphasis upon emotional engagement with literary text) by comparison to students taught from an efferent (information-seeking) perspective. Based upon the results of standardized test, he concluded that "there are few differences between critical programs [efferent] and response-centered courses of instruction" (p. 27).

Critical Thinking

Researchers have attained no consensus concerning the definition of "critical thinking". However, many educators tend to associate critical thinking with various cognitive or character traits, including "good thinking," "rationality," "autonomy," and "creativity" (Bailin, 1994; Barrow & Milburn, 1990; Resnick, 1990). Scholars occasionally emphasize that "critical thinking" encompasses several skills, including the ability to identify premises, assumptions, hypotheses, false statements, and generalizations (Kapel, Gifford, & Kapel, 1991). Several researchers have concluded that critical thinking is most effectively taught within the context of specific content areas, rather than as a subject in its own right (Barrow & Milburn, 1990; Resnick, 1990).

Schierloh (1992) maintains that "literature instruction can teach critical thinking" (p. 618); however, this researcher offers no clarification of the term "critical thinking." Cioffi (1992), though, delineates several subskills which, in his view, comprise such thinking: "...identifying factual discrepancies, persuasive devices, fallacies of reasoning" (p. 49). Schierloh asserts that these skills can be honed by studying literature. More specifically, he suggests that teachers

present students with two or more versions of the same work (for example, the Grimm Brothers' account of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and the Disney film rendition). Students are then encouraged to compare the versions.

Problem Solving

Educational researchers often employ the term "problem solving" to refer to "the process of applying previously acquired knowledge to new and unfamiliar situations" (Kapel, Gifford, & Kapel, 1991, p. 449). Therefore, the task of teaching problem solving involves "teaching students to be able to solve problems they have never solved before" (Mayer, 1994, p. 4728).

Langer (1992) insists that "storytelling is working toward a sense of the whole" (p. 36). Therefore, the ability to narrate a coherent narrative, or story, is a way of working through difficult problems and developing possible solutions. She suggests that physicians, lawyers, and other professionals are increasingly realizing the value of thinking through problems in a narrative manner in order to attain resolution of problems. Since, therefore, the skill of storytelling has pragmatic value, elementary and secondary curricula should not neglect literature instruction.

Similarly, Ogle (1992) proposes that students can refine their analytical and problem solving abilities by studying the problems encountered by major characters in fictional narratives. By identifying these problems, and developing possible resolutions (prior to reading the actual solutions in the story), students are provided practice with problem solving in possible real-world situations.

Writing Skills Development

In his review of research comparing writing skill with reading frequency, Krashen (1984) concluded that avid readers are also the most competent writers. Consistent with this view,

several advocates of literature instruction maintain that frequent exposure to literature will also enhance students' writing abilities (Eckhoff, 1983; Morrow, 1992).

Eckhoff (1983), for instance, demonstrated that second-grade students exposed to literary texts generated more complex writing samples than did pupils who read the simpler, more repetitious prose of traditional basal texts. She hypothesized that children familiar with the more elaborate lexical and syntactic constructions of literature were able to internalize these structures and, therefore, to generate elaborate sentences of their own.

Morrow's (1992) study of second-graders also seems to substantiate this view. She concluded that children provided literature-based instruction evinced significantly greater writing ability than pupils in a basal-only curriculum. (Writing ability, in this context, was measured as the average number of words per T-unit, or clause, generated by both groups of students during a post-test.) Morrow's findings suggest that improved writing skill offers an important rationale for the study of literature.

Development of a Literate Voice

Several researchers (Purcell-Gates, 1991; Villaume & Worden, 1993; Wittrock, 1983) have indicated that an essential criterion of the "literate voice" is the ability to generate relationships between a text and the reader's own knowledge, beliefs, and experiences. In addition, "literate voice" involves the ability to perceive semantic relationships between parts of a text (Wittrock, 1983, p. 601).

These investigators maintain that literature which is capable of engaging the minds and emotions of readers is the naturally most effective means of enabling students to generate personal transactions with text. Morrow (1992), for instance, discovered that second-grade readers of

literary texts were more able to generate inferences from their stories than were second-graders instructed with basals only. Villaume & Worden (1993) concluded that the "development of literate voices and high student engagement occurs more frequently in classrooms where talk is used for active inquiry rather than for recitation and review" (p. 463).

Appreciation of Literature/Aesthetic Development

Most educational researchers concur that judgements of aesthetic quality or value are not subject to clearly discernible, objective criteria (Barrow & Milburn, 1990; Gatherer, 1990). However, educators have not abandoned the notion that it is possible to teach the appreciation of literature. This appreciation often involves becoming sensitive to the emotional impact of literary works and developing an awareness of the manner in which language works to create these effects (Gatherer, 1990).

Rosenblatt's (1978) distinction between aesthetic and efferent reading processes has provided an important theoretical rationale for advocates of literature instruction. According to Rosenblatt, efferent reading occurs when "...the reader responds to the printed words or symbols, [and]...his attention is directed outward, so to speak, toward concepts to be retained, ideas to be tested, actions to be performed after the reading" (p. 24). Efferent reading, therefore, is focused upon a purpose (such as to extract information from a text) that is ultimately external to the material being read.

Aesthetic reading, however, involves a more emotionally engaged relationship to a text. In aesthetic reading, Rosenblatt insists, "the reader's primary concern is what happens during the actual reading event....In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (pp. 24-25). Rosenblatt

maintains that the same text may be read either from an efferent or an aesthetic perspective, she also claims that most actual reading occurs on a continuum, "a series of gradations between the nonaesthetic and the aesthetic extremes" (p. 35). However, Rosenblatt advocates that the most appropriate stance toward literature is predominantly aesthetic. Therefore, the major purpose of literature instruction should be the engagement with, and enjoyment of, literary text; skills building is a secondary goal.

Rosenblatt's focus upon the aesthetic experience of literature has had considerable influence upon the manner by which literary texts are studied in schools (Probst, 1991). However, several researchers have recommended caution concerning the uncritical acceptance of reader-response approaches to literature. Purcell-Gates (1991), for example, asserts that many remedial readers cannot comprehend the vocabulary of literary texts; these readers cannot attain a truly aesthetic stance. Sebesta, Monson, and Senn (1995) indicate that the ability to achieve an aesthetic relationship to literature may have a developmental dimension. These researchers maintain that students in grades 7-10 are more capable of reflective responses and evaluation than are younger readers; students in the earlier grades are more likely simply to retell stories.

Development of Familiarity with Story Grammar

Cognitive psychologists employ the terms "story grammar" and "story structure" to refer to the idea fictional narratives usually contain similar structural elements (such as goal-directed behavior by characters) and that readers anticipate the presence of these elements when comprehending stories (Eysenck & Keane, 1990).

McNeil (1987) asserts that story grammar refers to the elements of a narrative structure: setting (including characters and location), basic theme, plot episodes, and resolution of the

problem(s). This researcher, concurring with many cognitive psychologists, maintains that children who have internalized the mental structure, or schema, of a story grammar are more likely to remember and understand new narrative texts. Literature instruction provides a method by which students encounter text and develop awareness of story grammar.

Cultural Literacy

The term "cultural literacy" came to prominence when Hirsch (1988) published a work contending that most American writers and speakers assume that their audiences possess a corpus of similar background knowledge. This knowledge, or, in Hirsch's words, "cultural literacy", consists of terms, facts, quotations, and other references derived from reading a common pool of reference works and fictional texts. Hirsch asserts, for example, that culturally literate Americans should understand the meaning of "silicon chip," should know when the Civil War was fought, should know that Priam was King of Troy during the infamous war, and should recognize Sancho Panza as the likeable, if obese, comrade of Don Quixote.

Hirsch admonishes educators to integrate literature -- especially the well-known texts which form the sources for the items comprising "cultural literacy" -- into curricula at all levels. His views have been opposed by scholars and researchers who maintain that Hirsch's concept of literacy is insufficiently sensitive to the cultural contributions of women and minorities throughout American history (Purves, 1991). Other scholars agree that the concept of "cultural literacy" presents a worthy educational goal, but that the specific items discussed by Hirsch do not represent a definitive listing (Barrow & Milburn, 1990).

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Development of Self-esteem

Several researchers maintain that the experience of literature can increase students' confidence as readers and their awareness of themselves as worthwhile individuals (Beyersdorfer & Schauer, 1992; Miller, 1993). Miller (1993), for example, demonstrated that at-risk adolescent females developed enhanced self-esteem as result of an literature-based course of instruction. (In this context, self-esteem was measured on the basis of scores derived from an assessment instrument administered by the researchers.) Beyersdorfer & Schauer (1992) concluded that literature instruction can assist middle school students to develop more trusting relationships with adults.

Vocabulary Enrichment

Morrow's (1992) research indicated that second grade students exposed to literature-based instruction developed significantly larger vocabularies (as measured by written and oral story recalls) than students taught in a basal-only curriculum.

Dole, Sloan, & Trathen (1995), investigating the effects of literature instruction for secondary school students, concluded that vocabulary enrichment was one of the beneficial outcomes. These researchers emphasized that students were more likely to recognize and remember the meanings of words encountered within the context of literary texts.

How Does the Teaching of Literature Influence Learning?

The original intent of introducing literature "across the curriculum" -- into disciplines not usually associated with language arts -- was to provide additional opportunities for students to develop and practice critical reading skills (Hedley, Feldman, & Antonacci, 1992). Similar

motives provided the impetus for the "writing across the curriculum" movement. Educators soon realized that literature represents not merely a tool for reading practice, but is also a legitimate vehicle for providing content-area instruction.

Schierloh (1992), for example, maintains that literature instruction can help students develop background knowledge, particularly in the social studies. Concurring with this view, Sanacore (1993) suggests that literary texts enable students to "personalize" history, and, therefore, motivate learning. In addition, students may "sometimes learn interesting facts not found in textbooks" (p. 243). Guzzetti, Kowalinski, & McGowan (1992) discovered that sixth-grade students acquired more social studies concepts and a greater understanding of these concepts through literature-based instruction than through a traditional textbook-based approach.

Interestingly, researchers concerned with teaching literature in content areas generally do not utilize the same definition of "literature" as educators in the language arts. The latter are more likely to conceptualize literature as text that is linguistically rich and that has the potential for an emotionally and intellectually satisfactory relationship with a reader. However, content-area specialists tend to associate "literature" with trade books, as opposed to textbooks (Guzzetti, Kowalinski, & McGowan, 1992; Wepner & Feeley, 1993).

Several investigators have noted that textbooks in the social and physical sciences are frequently designed in such a manner that student involvement is discouraged and comprehension impeded. More specifically, researchers have criticized content-area textbooks for lack of coherence, overly dense prose, impersonal writing style, and inattention to causal links between related topics (Beck & Dole, 1992; Calfee, 1987; Sanacore, 1993). Literary texts may provide a more attractive instructional vehicle.

What are the Roles of Literature Texts in Language Education?

Despite the current utilization of literature within all grade levels and in many content areas, many researchers have commented that literary texts often occasion problems which may obstruct, rather than facilitate, learning (Adams, 1995; Calfee, 1987; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Purcell-Gates, 1991; Travers, 1984). These investigators maintain that the problems must be identified in order for instructors to teach literature most effectively.

Eeds & Wells (1989), for example, indicate that students frequently have difficulties understanding the figurative language typical of much poetry and narrative prose. Agreeing with this view, Purcell-Gates (1991) emphasizes that remedial readers have little comprehension of figurative language and, therefore, lack engagement with literary text. Purcell-Gates maintains that readers often fail to understanding figurative language even when these students can decode the words and comprehend their literal meanings. This phenomenon, she claims, requires educators to "focus beyond word-level difficulties to the very nature of the reader/text relationship" (p. 250).

Travers (1984) indicates that students often bring negative attitudes to the study of poetry, and these attitudes preclude enjoyable experience and worthwhile learning. According to Travers, these attitudes are generally transmitted by the students' instructors. Travers concludes that the teachers' behaviors and attitudes toward poetry have greater influence upon students' attitudes toward poetry than specific methods of instruction.

Adams (1995) suggests yet another potentially formidable difficulty with literary texts: complexity of thematic content. Certain classics, such as Romeo and Juliet, are concerned with situations which do not have an immediately contemporary appeal to students. Adams suggests

that teachers can overcome initial difficulty by means of text previews, engaging class discussions, and summaries of story elements.

Textbook design is also a troublesome issue in language arts classrooms, as has been discussed previously in relation to content-area classes. Calfee (1987) notes, for instance, that textbooks often neglect to provide headings, or other visual markers, concerning changes of subject or directing students' attention to specific structural features of a passage. These textbooks pose unnecessary obstacles to comprehension.

What is "Good" Literature?

A clear, explicit assessment of "good" literature is not available in current research. Generally, however, researchers' definitions of "literature" -- and their actual classroom practices-- provide implicit guidance concerning the notion of "goodness." Lazar (1993), for instance, focuses upon "language which is rich and multi-layered" as the defining criterion of good literature. Rosenblatt (1978) also mentions linguistic elements as contributing to the quality of literature.

Other investigators emphasize the experiential power of good literature. Schierloh (1992), for example, asserts that "great classic literature captures 'universal experiences'" (p. 619). She recommends that abridged versions of this literature -- including Jane Eyre, Great Expectations, King Solomon's Mines, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Kidnapped, Treasure Island, and The Time Machine -- are appropriate for use with adolescents or adult basic readers. Squire (1990), also claiming the experiential value of good literature, maintains that "works of genuine literary quality can evoke richer, more meaningful experience" (p. 19) than lesser works. Sulzby (1993) insists

that "...good literature can be experienced or comprehended many times from many vantage points" (p. 42). Natalie Babbitt's Tuck Everlasting, a novel intended for middle-school readers, would seem to meet Sulzby's criteria; the book deals poignantly with the large themes of love, the meaning of life, and the inevitability of death.

Several researchers hold a pragmatic view of good literature (Gatherer, 1990; Ollmann, 1993). These investigators accept the notion that literature is "good" if it appeals to students, maintains their attention, and encourages the enjoyable practice of reading (Ollmann, 1993).

How Should Literature be Presented in the Classroom?

Current research offers a variegated array of instructional strategies intended to facilitate the teaching of literature; most of these strategies are designed to promote the learning objectives discussed earlier in this paper (Cox & Many, 1992; Fuhler, 1994; Gambrell & Jawitz, 1993; Langer, 1994; Many & Wiseman, 1992; Morrow, 1992; Simpson, 1994). Generally, however, the teaching techniques can be classed into four major categories described below.

Peer Group Discussion

Many investigators maintain that engagement with literary texts is more easily motivated and sustained within a small, peer group environment than in whole-class discussion. Simpson (1994), for instance, reports the effectiveness of using "literature circles" -- groups of five or six students who select a common novel to read and then meet weekly to discuss their reactions. Morrow (1992) also advocates the use of small group discussions, claiming that they encourage expression of the "joy of literature" (p. 258). Fuhler (1994) proposes that students record their

reactions to literature in journals and then share these writings with other members of their peer discussion group.

Cognitive Modeling by Teacher

Durkin (1979) maintained that many instructors fail to provide students with the skills or strategies needed to accomplish cognitive tasks. These instructors, she claimed, merely "mention" that students should strive toward a specific goal, such as identifying the main idea of a passage, without actually providing guidance concerning how to attain the goal.

Current researchers, aware of Durkin's admonitions, have focused attention upon many ways by which teachers can model cognitive tasks in relation to literature instruction. Adams (1995), for example, insists that instructors must model to their students the processes required to comprehend a difficult textual passage, such as a scene in Romeo and Juliet. Fuhler (1994) reports that teachers should model the skills necessary to respond to literature in a writing journal. Villaume & Worden (1993) maintain that instructors must explicitly model the kinds of verbal responses appropriate in group discussions of literature; otherwise, according to these investigators, students tend to discuss their reactions in "I liked/hated" terms. Concurring with this approach, Spires, Huffman, Honeycutt, & Barrow (1995) assert that teachers of college developmental students must explicitly model responses to literature. Gambrell & Jawitz (1993) report that elementary school children demonstrate improved comprehension performance when their teacher provides instruction concerning the most effective means to induce mental imagery while reading literary texts. Ollmann (1993) insists that instructors can model to students the most appropriate methods for selecting literature wisely. Maria & Hathaway (1993) advocate that instructors must develop self-conscious awareness of their own comprehension strategies,

this awareness will assist teachers to better understand and appreciate the cognitive problems experienced by students.

Adopting an Aesthetic Approach to Literature

Impressed by Rosenblatt's distinction between the efferent and aesthetic stances toward reading, several investigators have advocated the adoption of strategies intended to foster an engaged, personal approach to literature instruction. Langer (1994), for instance insists that many classrooms inappropriately focus upon an efferent search for "one right answer" to literary issues. Many & Wiseman (1992) maintain that literature should be taught more "as an aesthetic experience than as a lesson to be studied" (p. 265). These researchers concluded, based on a study of 120 third-grade students, that focus upon aesthetic involvement with text encourages pupils to have greater involvement with the story than that experienced by students instructed from a primarily efferent approach. Cox & Many (1992) discovered that fifth-grade students understand text to a greater extent if they have been instructed from an aesthetic perspective, in contrast to students receiving predominantly efferent instruction.

Most researchers maintain that an aesthetic approach to literature is promoted primarily by means of in-class discussion and appropriately open-ended questions initiated by the teacher (Langer, 1994). However, several investigators identify additional strategies consistent with an aesthetic perspective. Ollmann (1993), for instance, claims that students should be permitted to select their own literature for reading. Hancock (1993) advocates the use of character journals, in which students assume the roles of characters in novels and write from the standpoint of these characters.

Reading Aloud/Dramatization/Audiobooks

Schierloh (1992) reports the effectiveness of reading aloud to adult basic readers. This technique, she maintains, provides a model for fluent reading skill; in addition, the read aloud sessions seem to increase student motivation to read the text by themselves. Baskin & Harris (1995) claim that audiobooks are a useful tool in secondary school classrooms. Audiobooks, they conclude, enable students to better comprehend the language of poetry. In addition, the complex linguistic constructions of some novels -- such as those by Hawthorne, Wharton, and Dickens -- are more easily navigated when presented via audiobook. Special students, especially those with visual impairments, especially benefit from the use of audiobooks.

Conclusion

Current research in the field of literature instruction offers a potpourri of theories, objectives, and strategies which frequently present striking contradictions and paradoxes (Cioffi, 1992; Langer, 1994; Ogle, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978). For instance, advocates of Rosenblatt's aesthetic approach to literature seemingly seek an altogether different order of learning outcomes than those researchers concerned with the refinement of critical thinking and problem solving skills. In addition, many investigators propose that the teacher of literature should assume the role of a facilitator, a fellow-learner who guides student discussion by means of stimulating and open-ended questions. Other researchers, however, emphasize that teachers must adopt the more direct stance of a mature individual who explicitly models the cognitive outcomes desired from students.

Clearly, though, the current status of research concerning literature instruction reveals a discipline which has confidently expanded beyond its former confines within secondary and college-level English classes. Today, the experience of literature is encountered at all grade levels and throughout the curriculum. It has become an essential element of literacy instruction.

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